

Tom Horne
Superintendent

N·E·W·S

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

For More Information contact Amy Rezzonico, Press Secretary (602) 542-5072

For Immediate Release:
Thursday, June 29, 2006

ACADEMIC GAINS SKYROCKET FOR ARIZONA'S READING FIRST SCHOOLS

PHOENIX (Thursday, June 29, 2006) -- Arizona State Superintendent Tom Horne today announced academic gains in Arizona's first group of Reading First schools which included 26 districts and 72 schools across the state. Upon completion of three years of implementing a comprehensive K – 3 reading program, academic gains are skyrocketing.

Horne stated: "Research clearly indicates that it is possible to prevent early reading difficulties if we establish a prevention model for reading instruction that emphasizes a systematic approach to instruction. With early intervention, educators can effectively catch children before they fail, and Reading First is doing just that."

All Reading First Schools have a high percentage of students living in poverty and are predominantly at risk for academic success. Arizona Reading First schools have some of the highest percentages of "at risk" kindergarteners in the country, but 86% completed grade level material at the end of this past school year, compared to 9% entering at grade level three years ago. (The attached charts 1 - 4 show data for each grade level).

Arizona's Reading First student achievement data demonstrates that ELL and native speakers follow similar paths in the development of early literacy skills (see chart 5 below). Chart 6 shows how Reading First Schools outperformed comparison schools with the same demographics.

The Arizona Department of Education Reading First project will continue to unfold over the next three years, with formal participation by 146 schools, 3,100 educators and approximately 47,000 students. However, academies to teach Reading First techniques are available to all Arizona schools. The goal remains the same for K-3 educators; all Arizona students will read proficiently by the end of third grade.

SEE ATTACHED CHARTS BELOW

Chart 1

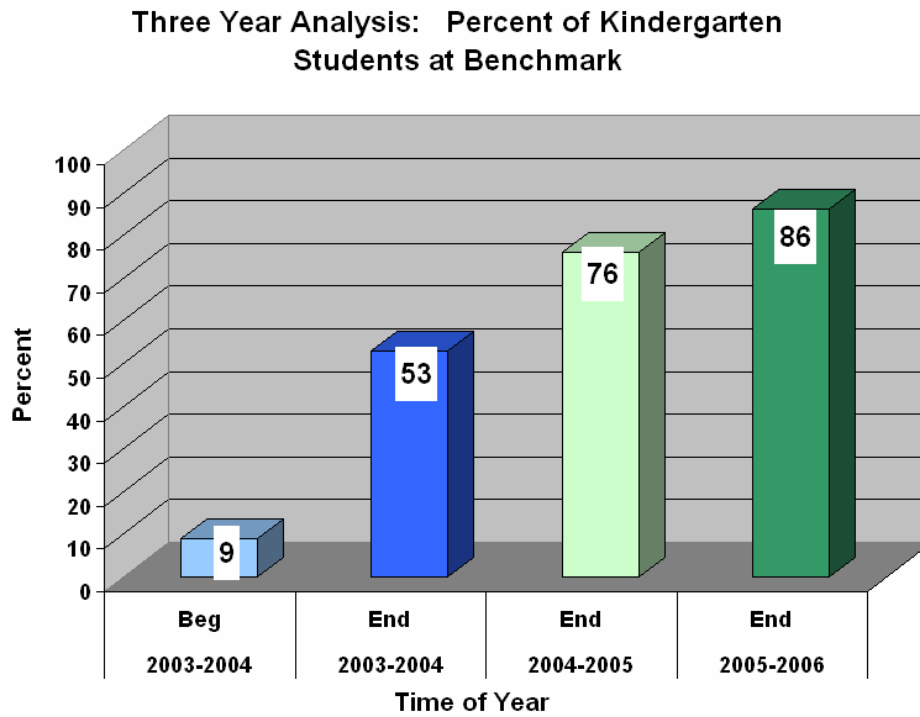


Chart 2

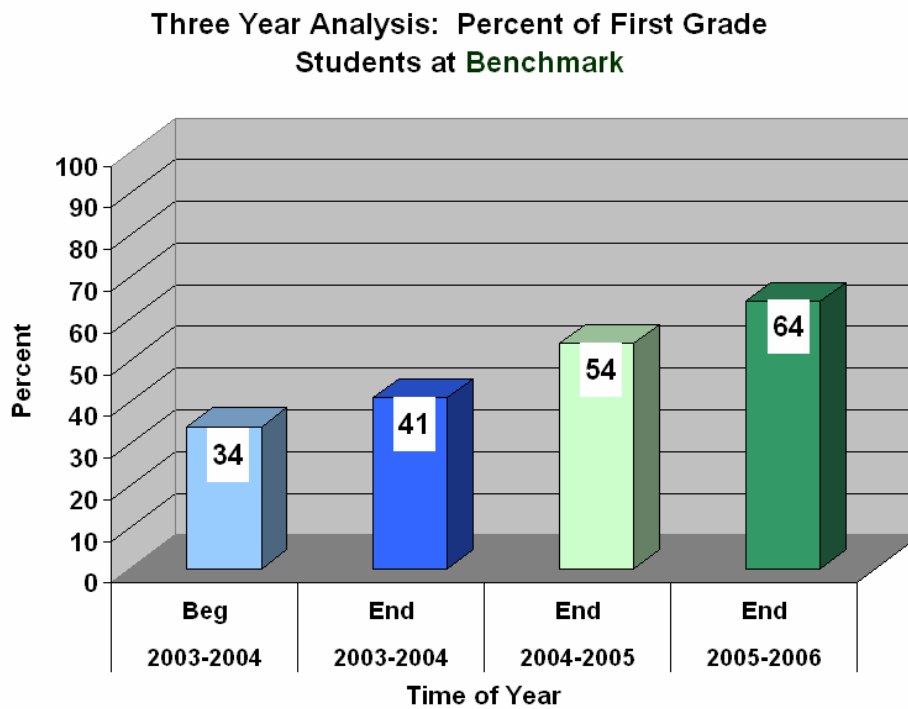


Chart 3

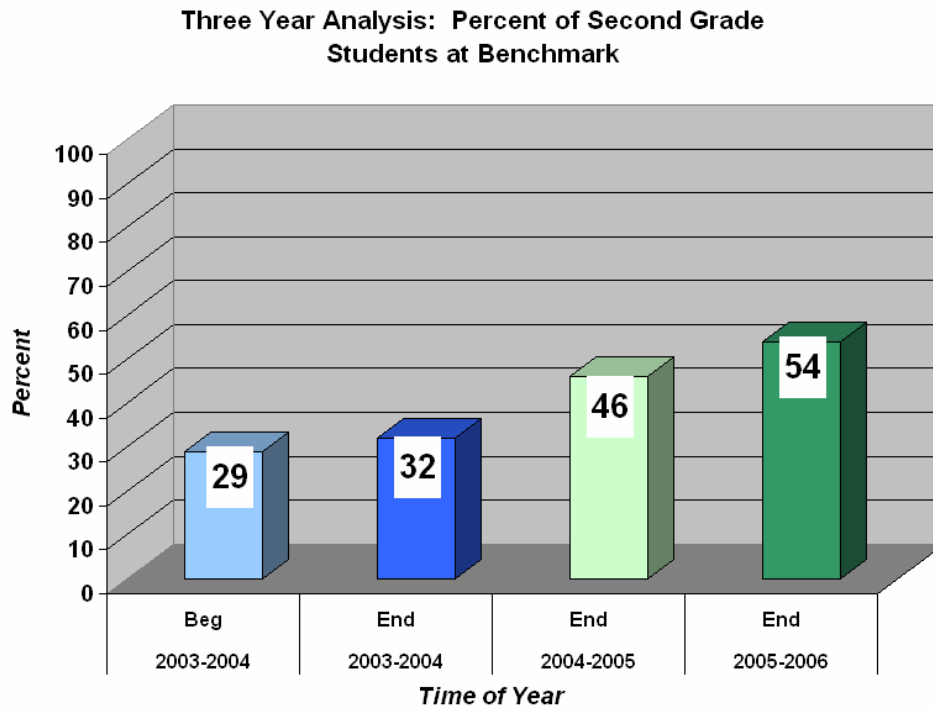


Chart 4

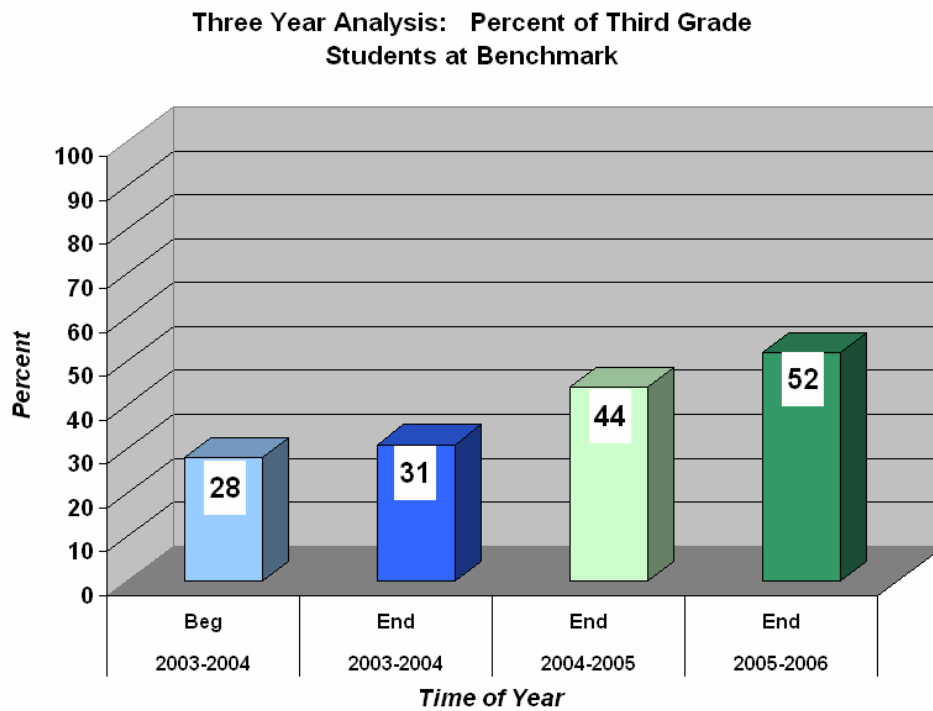


Chart 5

PSF: Percent of First Grade Students at Benchmark

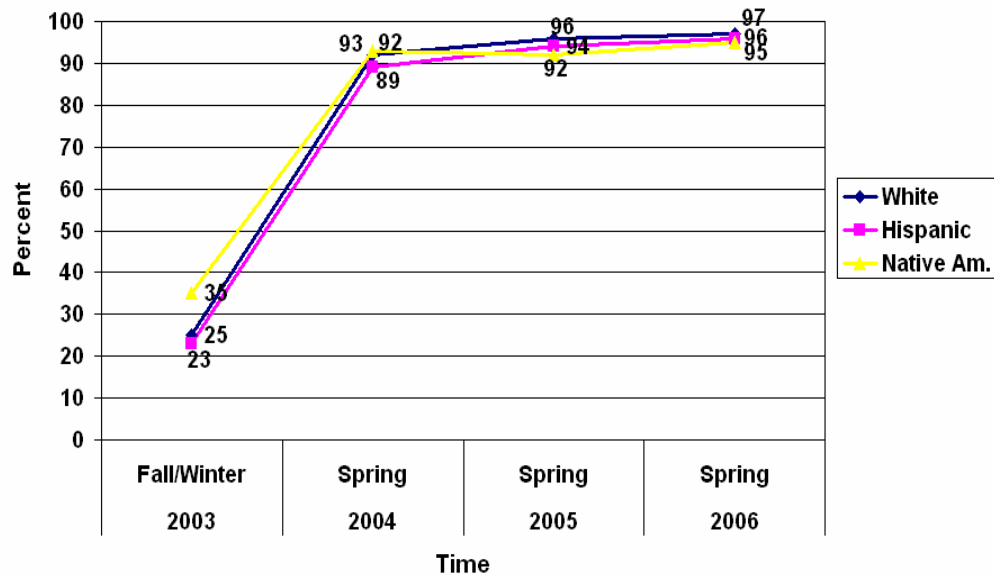


Chart 6

AZ Reading First and Comparison Schools Percent Students at Benchmark

